

24 July 1953

MEMORANDUM FOR: Chairman, Professional Selection Panel
SUBJECT: The Process of Selecting New Career Employees

1. Reference your memorandum to Personnel Director, subject as above, dated 23 June 1953, in which you ask for recommendations as to steps which can be taken to improve the existing selection process.

2. This Office offers the following suggestions with respect to the points presented in Paragraph 2 a of your memorandum:

a. Qualities Required of Career Employees.

(1) The Professional Selection Panel should develop, with the approval of the CIA Career Service Board, a full description of each of the personal qualities which should be possessed by a CIA career employee. These would be the qualities which indicate suitability for long-term career service with the Agency. Evidence that an individual is lacking in one or more of these qualities would be an indication that he may not be suitable for career association with the Agency. The descriptive statements should be direct, specific, simply phrased, and understandable to a wide audience of persons with varying degrees of experience in the evaluation of other persons. Each set of statements concerning a quality should include an adequate number of examples of behavior which evidences a deficiency in the quality. These statements should, of course, be over and beyond certain basic qualification requirements relating to education, training and experience.

(2) The descriptive statements and other information concerning the qualities required for career service should be disseminated as follows:

(a) Recruiting Officers. These officers would utilize these criteria to screen and refer applicants for career employment with the Agency. Applicants believed to lack the desired qualities would not be referred to the Agency. Thus, the suitability criteria would be applied throughout the recruiting process. As you know, the recruitment staff is now possessed of a rather well defined set of personal standards which are applied by them against each applicant. The applicant, of course, is unaware of the extent to which he is being analyzed in this process.

(b) Placement Officers. These officers would utilize these criteria during their interviewing and screening of applicants

for career employment with the Agency. These criteria would be in their minds during review of Personal History Statements, during checks with former employers, during their review of all other records and information on hand, during their interviews of the applicants, and generally throughout the initial selection and referral process. Persons considered to be unsuitable would be rejected by the Placement Officers. Placement Officers would also apply these suitability criteria during their contacts with trial-period employees (e.g., placement follow-up, reassignment planning).

(c) Component Personnel Officers. These officers would utilize these criteria during their interviews of applicants referred by Placement Officers, during their examination of the qualifications and records of the applicants, and during their observation of the applicants throughout the final initial placement process. They would also apply these criteria during their subsequent contacts with employees during the trial period.

(d) Chiefs of Components. These officials (chiefs of units, sections, branches, divisions) would apply these criteria during initial selection interviews with applicants and during all subsequent contacts with the trial-period employees and discussions with their supervisors. Applicants who are found by component chiefs to fail to possess the necessary qualities would be rejected by the Personnel Office. Trial-period employees whose suitability is questioned by the component chiefs would be referred by the component to the Professional Selection Panel for review and recommendation.

(e) Immediate Supervisors. The most important use of suitability criteria would be accomplished by the supervisors of trial-period employees. They would utilize the criteria during initial selection interviews, during all of their observation of and association with the employees throughout the trial period, and especially when completing the initial Personnel Evaluation Report. They would apply these criteria constantly for many months, and therefore could make the most factual recommendations concerning the employee's suitability. Applicants who are believed by supervisors to fail to possess the necessary qualities would, with the concurrence of the component chief, be rejected by the Personnel Office. Trial-period employees whose suitability is questioned by their supervisors would be referred by their component to the Professional Selection Panel for review and recommendation.

(f) Security Office. This Office would apply these criteria at all times when collecting and reviewing information concerning applicants for career employment and concerning trial-period career employees. Whenever the Security Office encounters infor-

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mation which indicates a lack of the necessary qualities and which causes doubt as to the career service suitability of an in-process applicant, it will discuss the case with the Personnel and Medical Offices, as appropriate, for decision.

(g) Career Service Boards. The Boards would apply these criteria in all of their considerations and evaluations of employees during their trial periods (and also during the initial selection process for such Boards as review proposed appointments). The Boards would make an especially careful evaluation of the employee just before the conclusion of his trial period, using supervisory reports and testimony, initial Personnel Evaluation Reports, interviews with the employee himself if indicated, personnel records and folders, and such other evaluative data and techniques as are available. This evaluation would be accomplished primarily to determine if the individual possesses the defined qualities required for career service. When the Career Service Board does not find the trial-period employee suitable for career service, it would recommend that the Office Head refer the case to the Professional Selection Panel for review and recommendation. If, on the other hand, it found the employee suitable, acceptance for career service could be indicated by the Personnel Office after favorable review by the Professional Selection Panel.

(h) Trial-Period Employees. Each appointee would understand that he is undergoing a trial period, and that he will be carefully evaluated throughout and at the end of this period in order to determine if he is suitable for career service and its benefits. It is his right to know what personal qualities and behavior are expected of him, since he will be separated rather summarily if he does not possess the requisite qualities. At the present time, the Agency notifies applicants that they must meet the personal standards required for government employment (e.g., character, mental and physical fitness); by this method individuals, who know that they may be exposed later, have the opportunity to withdraw their applications for the good of all concerned. Similarly, if our standards for career service qualities are valid and are to be enforced, they should be no secret, and the applicants should know the kinds of evaluations to which they will be exposed and the qualities they must prove. It would be making a mystery of common sound personnel practice and would be establishing a secret society if candidates were asked to undergo a test period of close scrutiny and evaluation without permitting them to know which things about their natures were to be evaluated. Thus, both applicants and trial-period employees should know what they are facing and what qualities they are expected to possess as CIA Career Employees.

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b. Use of Personnel Evaluation Reports.

(1) Initial Personnel Evaluation Reports should be given much more emphasis and consideration than at present. If supervisors thoroughly understand the specific qualities being measured in trial-period employees, if they carefully observe the employee in terms of these qualities during the trial-period, and if they are aware of the importance of initial Personnel Evaluation Reports in determining suitability for career service, they will accomplish much more effective initial evaluation reports than at present. The initial PER would truly become the primary instrument for recording evaluations specifically in terms of the factors which are the basis for determining career suitability. The initial PER should reflect the opinions of the persons who know the trial-period employee best, who have been responsible for his work throughout the period, and who are in the best possible position to report on the qualities which the new employee has demonstrated.

(2) Increased emphasis should be placed on completing and submitting initial Personnel Evaluation Reports when they are due. If the initial PER is given proper use as a primary instrument for determining suitability for career service, it is essential for the report to be submitted in sufficient time to be available for all considerations and processes that must take place prior to the expiration of the trial-period.

c. Evaluation of In-Process Applicants for Career Employment.

When either the Personnel, Medical, or Security Office obtains marginal information which creates doubt as to the career suitability of an in-process applicant, the chiefs of these offices or their designated representatives should confer and decide whether processing should continue. By the same token, if an operating office learns of unfavorable information it should be passed immediately to the Personnel Office with recommendation for action to be taken. The Personnel-Medical-Security Group should confer and take action as is indicated.

d. Evaluation of Employees During Trial Period.

(1) If at any time during the probationary period the office to which the employee is assigned, or the Personnel, Medical, or Security Office obtains information which creates doubt as to career suitability, the case should be immediately referred to the Professional Selection Panel. The Panel should review the evidence at hand and either make a recommendation for termination of the individual or so flag the individual's personnel file that a full review will be made of his case prior to the expiration of the trial-period.

(2) No later than one month before the end of an employee's trial-period, his Career Service Board should consider his case in

order to determine whether or not he has been found suitable for career service. At this time, his Board should review his performance during this period, his initial Personnel Evaluation Report, and any other available indicators of his character, personality, capability, and performance. During this evaluation the Board may interview both the employee and his supervisor. The Board will use all information available in the Personnel Office. After careful consideration, the Board should recommend to the Office Head either that the trial-period employee be separated or accepted for career service. Such recommendations should be based upon performance (as in other government agencies) as well as upon possession of the qualities required of the CIA career employee.

(3) If the Office Career Service Board recommends that the employee has satisfactorily completed his trial-period and is suitable for career service, and the Office Head concurs, he will so notify the Professional Selection Panel. If the Panel concurs, the Personnel Office will be notified to change personnel records correspondingly and will issue appropriate notification to the employee.

(4) If during an employee's trial-period, he is reported to the Professional Selection Panel as being possibly unsuitable for career employment (see Paragraph 2 d (1) above), or if his Career Service Board recommends with Office Head concurrence that he be separated as unsuitable, the Professional Selection Panel should accomplish a formal review of the case. If the Panel finds the trial-period employee unsuitable as reported, it will notify the Personnel Office which will accomplish the separation. If the Panel finds the trial-period employee suitable for career service, it will notify the Operating Office of its findings. If the difference of opinion is not resolved, the case may be appealed by the employee's sponsoring component to the CIA Career Service Board which will review the case and make final decision.

e. Notification of Acceptance for Career Service.

Since under this proposed procedure the new employee will know the qualities required of the CIA career employee, and will also know that he is being constantly evaluated for these qualities throughout his trial-period, it is believed that he will be made sufficiently aware of a significant change in his standing if he receives a notice from the Personnel Office to the effect that he is now accepted as a career employee and that his trial-period has been satisfactorily completed.

3. With respect to Paragraph 2 b of your memorandum, it is the opinion of this Office that no feasible and legal procedure can be established to extend the trial-service period beyond one year for employees, whether professional or otherwise. Such a procedure is inconsistent with the current public policy (as reflected by the Congress in such legislation as the Veterans Preference Act) that a probationary period of one year is believed adequate

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for federal employees. It is believed that to request the necessary special legislation (as would be necessary in view of existing legislation concerning veterans) would create unfavorable public relations, and would probably strain relations with the Congress. It is also our opinion that extension of the trial-period beyond one year would make it definitely more difficult to attract competent people to service with the Agency although we recognize this is a most point.

4. The following comments are offered with respect to Paragraph 2 c of your memorandum:

a. If the procedures proposed in Paragraph 2 above are susceptible to adoption, it would be unnecessary to develop a single file of all information concerning each applicant or employee.

b. Information presently available only to the Security Office should remain in their files as at present. If those who review this information are trained in the understanding of the qualities required for a career with the Agency, they can detect pertinent information within their data and submit it to the Professional Selection Panel whenever warranted, or confer with the Medical and Personnel Offices in the case of applicants for employment.

c. Information contained in the files and records of the Personnel Office would be made available both to the sponsoring components and to the Professional Selection Panel. If these records concerning an applicant contained information indicating non-suitability, the Personnel Office would reject him. If the information were marginal and merely created doubt as to suitability, the Personnel Office would pool information with the Medical and Security Offices before acting. If these records concerning a trial-period employee are later supplemented by information indicating non-suitability, the Personnel Office would refer the case to the Panel. Thus the records are used for suitability screening and are also made available upon request to be used by others for suitability screening. The same situation would undoubtedly obtain with respect to Medical Office information.

d. Information which pertains to the suitability of a probationary employee and which is contained in the reports, files, and records of the office to which he is assigned would be made available to the Office Career Service Board concerned. It should also be made available, in extract or other form, to the Professional Selection Panel when needed specifically for formal decision on a case.

e. Whenever the Security Office, the Personnel Office, the Medical Office, or the sponsoring office actually presents a case to the Professional Selection Panel, it should also present the documented evidence as to why the person concerned is considered unsuitable for career service.

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When this occurs, the Panel may ask the other offices to present whatever information they may possess to indicate that the person may not be suitable. Thus, a file is developed which contains only information pertinent to decision as to suitability, and it is necessary to develop such a file only when the suitability of the individual has been questioned.

5. The following comments are offered with respect to Paragraph 2 d of your memorandum:

a. Under the procedures proposed above, the suitability of each applicant for career service employment would be examined by recruiting personnel, Placement Officers, Operating Office Personnel Officers, component chiefs, immediate supervisors, and by the Security Office which reviews the special detailed information available to it. These examinations would be conducted in the light of the known fixed criteria for acceptance.

b. If these separate examinations (many of which include personal contacts and investigations) do not elicit evidence of non-suitability, it is very doubtful that any independent officer can make a better judgment by merely reviewing records and files. When all of the offices and officers charged with selecting qualified and suitable personnel are given the improved selection criteria requested above, and when their selection processes are strengthened as proposed above, it is difficult to see the necessity to appoint "responsible" officers from other components to review the soundness of their decisions.

6. The Personnel Office appreciates the opportunity to furnish its views to the Professional Selection Panel in this matter, and will provide additional explanations or assistance upon request.

/s/ George E. Meloon

GEORGE E. MELOON
Personnel Director

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